The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

For Immediate Release
Feb. 9, 2000

Contact: Stacie Leatherman, (216) 421-7340, ext. 265

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLEVELAND NATIVE LYNN GEESAMAN FEATURED IN NEW EXHIBITION

CLEVELAND — Recent prints by internationally recognized photographer Lynn Geesaman will be presented in the exhibition **Lynn Geesaman Photographs: Poetics of Place** at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) Mar. 18 through May 24, 2000. The subjects of these meticulously composed photographs, taken between 1992 and 1997, range from formal gardens in France, Scotland, and Belgium, to American national parks and battlefields. Geesaman's work has been shown in over 80 solo and group exhibitions in the United States, France, and Belgium since 1980, including shows at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago. Fifteen color and black-and-white prints will be in the CMA show. Admission is free.

Tom Hinson, curator of contemporary art and photography, has organized the exhibition. He notes: "Geesaman's strength is her ability to reveal the beauty and poetics of a particular place, emphasizing first the scene's abstract qualities, then inviting the eye to scrutinize the immense amount of subtle detail present. It's a fairly rare pleasure to see how one photographer works out her vision in both black-and-white and color media. Her pictures pique a longing to return to things beautiful, while at the same time reexamining subject matter we may think is thoroughly familiar."

Raised in Cleveland, Geesaman was educated at Wellesley College with a B.A. in physics and mathematics. She worked first as a nuclear cyclotron technician in Livermore, California and later as a middle-school math teacher before devoting all her time to photography.

Largely self-trained, she spent a short period photographing construction sites and quarries around Minneapolis in the early 1980s, then decided her best photos were of gardens and other "natural" areas. Though inspired by the 19th-century pictorialists, who emphasized soft focus, atmospheric lighting, and formally balanced compositions,

(more ...)

11150 EAST BOULEVARD, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106-1797
TEL 216-421-7340 TDD 216-421-0018 FAX 216-421-0411

Geesaman does not use a soft-focus lens. Preferring darkroom manipulation, she employs a diffusing technique that results in an appealing haziness in her large, 20- x 24-inch prints, without sacrificing such essential features as a clearly defined sunbeam or a gazebo's delicate latticework.

The prints in this show, all landscapes, project an idealized state that often deliberately omits the reality of the depicted locale — dense overgrowth, trash, busy roads, and tourists — establishing a stage where the viewer can insert his or her own stories. In the color print, *Parc de Sceaux, Paris, France* (1997), perfectly sculpted trees tower over a wide path, their trimmed and flattened bulks forming a narrowing, seemingly infinite walkway. Dark trees frame the Eden-like setting in *Clermont, Kentucky* (1993), a scene that features a nearly electric blue lake, vivid green foliage, and pink-flowering trees against a clear, pale sky.

Geesaman's black-and-white prints emphasize bold silhouettes and striking contrasts of light and shade, coupled with intriguing abstract patterns, seen in the lyre-shaped tree and eerie sky of *Arboretum de Cheoreloup, France* (1992), and in *Huntington Gardens* (1996), where a lone tree, its trunk bent to a 90-degree angle, thrives in the middle of a rock-piled stream, and is reflected in the still, glossy water.

According to Geesaman, "Today to portray something that is ideal and perfect and beautiful, that is somehow radical. I think a photo succeeds to the extent … it has a feeling that all is well with the world, it's all in balance, it's a quiet haven, a place that expresses beauty, intelligence, elegance."

For more information on the CMA and its events, call **1-888-CMA-0033** or online at **www.clemusart.com**.

# # #